TUC calls for "step change" in UK approach to AI as poll finds majority of public are concerned over jobs

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[The TUC](link) has launched a new flagship "worker first" AI strategy that calls on the UK government to make a step change in its approach to AI to deliver for workers and protect jobs.

The union body says AI technologies can be harnessed to the benefit of all workers and help improve public services – and is calling for an urgent and active policy response, with workers front and centre.

New polling

The AI "worker first" strategy is launched as new TUC polling, conducted by Survation, reveals over half (51%) of the public are concerned about the impact of AI and new technologies on their job.

Job losses or changes to terms and conditions were the most commonly cited concern.

The polling also shows that people are worried about the impact of AI on their job right across the political spectrum – with 52% of Labour voters, 49% of Conservative voters and 52% of Reform voters.

And it is a particular worry for young workers early in their career, rising to 62% of workers aged 25-34.

Voters across the board want workers to shape AI

Most workers want a say in how technology and AI is used at work and the wider economy – as opposed to leaving it to corporate and shareholder interests.

Half of the public (50%) believe that workers and unions should have an equal say with business on shaping the future of AI and technology in the UK – with just 17% opposing.

This is a view held across the political spectrum, and it is important with key target voters too: 65% of Labour voters, 60% of Labour voters switching to Reform, and 71% of Labour voters switching to the Green Party.

Worker first plan

Setting out its plan, the TUC says workers need a voice in the decisions that shape their lives and the future of AI innovation as whole – from regulation and public funding for AI tech, through to how it is used in workplaces and who gets a share in any productivity gains.

The TUC is calling for:

- Conditions attached to the tens of billions of pounds of public money spent on AI research and development to ensure workers are supported, rather than deskilled or replaced by AI tech.

- Ensuring workers secure a 'digital dividend' of any AI productivity gains by;

- Empowering workers to shape firms' decision making – including by putting workers on boards,

- Requiring companies to invest in workforce skills and training,

- Improving pay and conditions and extending collective bargaining across the economy.

- Making sure 'good work' strings are attached to the billions of pounds of taxpayers' money spent on private sector tech involvement in public services – bolstering support for the UK's AI industry, while also building public sector tech capacity in-house.

- Putting in place the guardrails so that workers are protected from AI harms at work and ensuring worker involvement in determining whether and how AI is used, starting with implementation of the [TUC's model AI Bill](link).

- Strengthening the UK's social security and skills systems to be better geared to support those who

experience job transitions as a result of AI disruption – supporting workers to move between roles without significant financial detriment and allowing them opportunities to reskill and retrain.

The union body warns that without a "worker-first plan", AI could lead to "rampant inequality", degraded working lives and the discontent that the far right thrives on.

TUC Assistant General Secretary Kate Bell said: "AI could have transformative potential – and if developed properly, workers can benefit from the productivity gains this technology may bring. But for this to happen workers must be placed at the heart of AI innovation.

"That means ensuring public money comes with strings attached, and isn't siphoned away into the pockets of billionaire tech bosses. It means ensuring workers get a share in any productivity gains from new technologies. And it means dedicated training and skills programmes to protect workers in industries that may be disrupted by AI.

"The alternative is bleak. Left unmanaged and in the wrong hands, the AI revolution could entrench rampant inequality as jobs are degraded or displaced, and shareholders get richer.

"We cannot let that happen. Unmanaged disruption is not inevitable or acceptable. It's time for an urgent and active policy response that makes sure workers are not left behind. AI technologies can help build a better future – we're setting out a plan that shows how it can be done."